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**TO MAKE E.COLI INFECTIONS RARE, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAYS EAT
BURGERS WELL DONE**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—When the summer sun starts shining, patios and decks become home to barbeque grills, crowded with hamburgers. To keep your barbeque party a festive occasion for all who step up with a bun, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) urges charcoal chefs to thoroughly cook hamburgers to prevent illness from *E. coli*. So far in Virginia this year, 11 cases of illness caused by a certain bacteria, *E. coli* O157:H7, have been reported.

Don't rely on your eyes to tell you that the meat is done, because looks can be deceiving. Ground beef is safe to eat once it has been cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees. Use a grill thermometer to ensure your burger is ready for your favorite condiments. Also remember that outdoor grills may not distribute heat evenly so extra precautions should be taken to ensure that hamburgers, especially previously frozen patties, are well done before serving.

"Eating undercooked ground beef is a common cause of certain types of *E. coli* illness. Therefore, cooking your hamburgers until they are well done is the safest and healthiest way to enjoy one of America's favorite foods," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

Symptoms of *E.coli* infection usually appear two to four days after exposure. The illness often causes bloody diarrhea and stomach cramps. Other symptoms may include vomiting, fever, and chills. In a small percentage of cases, the infection can cause the kidneys to stop functioning, particularly in young children. An ill person can spread the disease to others for three weeks or more, so good hygiene is also important to prevent this disease.

To serve your famous summer feast with everything, except a side of *E. coli* that is, follow these tips:

- Never eat rare or undercooked ground beef.
- Cook meat to 160 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. The color of the meat may not be a reliable indicator that the meat is well done.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk or cider.
- Always wash raw fruits or vegetables before eating.
- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after preparing foods, and after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Always refrigerate meat products. Never leave raw meats at room temperature.
- Wash cutting boards after meats have touched them and before using the same surface to cut fruits and vegetables. It's best to use separate cutting boards for meats and other foods.
- Make sure children wash their hands carefully, especially after using the toilet or handling animals.
- People with diarrhea should not use public swimming facilities.
- Clean and disinfect diapering areas, toilets/potty chairs, toys, etc. at least daily and when soiled.

For more information, visit the VDH Web site at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epi/ecolifi.htm>

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